

# ABROAD

## HAVANA

### *Tobacco Trouble*

Cuban cigars are in trouble both at home and abroad, and although the famous Havanas account for only a paltry 3 per cent of Cuban exports, the big cigars have always been the island's greatest prestige product. The crops themselves have taken a beating in recent years, both from hurricane damage and from the noxious blue mold that caused an almost total loss of the tobacco harvest five years ago. There has been a recovery, but a new menace lies on the horizon: the entry of Spain, one of the biggest importers of Cuban tobacco (an annual fifty million cigars), into the European Economic Community. What will happen—as happened when Britain, another big importer of Cuban tobacco, joined the EEC—is the imposition of the Community's 41 per cent levy on all imported tobacco. The idea of the levy was to help the European tobacco industry on the one hand, and on the other to give favored entry to crops coming from the so-called Lomé countries, former European colonies in Africa. One solution to Cuba's difficulties in this respect may be supplying raw tobacco to Spanish cigar manufacturers at a popular-brand level. The Cuban market was of course deeply affected by the ban on Cuban imports by the United States. Other adverse factors are the anti-smoking lobby and the increasing popularity of cheap cigars and cigarette-sized cheroots from Jamaica, the Netherlands, and the United States.

## SINGAPORE

### *Dollar Accounts*

The Singapore dollar is one of the hardest currencies in the world as well as the repository of unusual popular faith. Not only do investors from all over the globe like to bank here (the city-state is regarded as a Far Eastern Zurich); its paper money is treasured for its own sake. Thus the Singaporean \$10,000 bill—which is found not in bank vaults but in private hands, and is worth U.S.\$5,500—has been referred to as “the planet's most valuable currency note.” The island's 2.5 million inhabitants maintain an impressive 40 per cent rate of savings. The \$1,000 note represents an astonishing fifth of the money in circulation, while the \$50 note, the most popular of all, represents 30 per cent.

## SEVILLE

### *Famous Bones*

The five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America is only six years away; it is therefore not a moment too soon for a new dispute to break out over the place where Columbus's body actually lies buried. Heretofore, the cathedrals of Seville and of Santo Domingo in the West Indies have both claimed the bones of the Great Discoverer. Several new elements in the case have made their appearance, however, in particular a procedure devised by a scientist in California that is supposed to be able to identify the place a person grew up in through isotopic examination of his tooth enamel. Applying this test to a molar from Santo Domingo would presumably prove whether or not the body buried there was Genoese, but it has been discounted in advance by a professor at the University of

Genoa, Gaetano Ferro, who says the test would necessarily have a large margin of error. Furthermore, Professor Ferro asserts, the Santo Domingo bones are probably those not of Columbus but of his son Diego. Meanwhile, a former director of the great research library in Seville, the Archivos de las Indias, says that the bones of Columbus are not wholly in one place or the other, but are divided between the two tombs. According to this authority, José de la Peña Cámara, the Seville bones were removed from Santo Domingo in 1795, when that part of the island of Hispaniola was ceded by Spain to the French, and were transferred to Havana, whence they were moved to Seville when Cuba became independent in 1898. The bones now resting in Santo Domingo were found during repairs to the cathedral presbytery in 1877. The Dominicans have said that the bones removed in 1795 were not demonstrably those of Columbus, while the Spaniards maintain that the 1877 find consisted of the bones not of Columbus but of his nephew. With respect to this quarrel, the Dominican historian Pedro Troncoso Sánchez wrote recently in a Spanish newspaper: “On many occasions, including this one, it happens that the force of a desire has closed the path to the discovery of the truth.” On that point at least there appears to be agreement.

## PARIS

### *Drastic Changes*

The silhouette of the Paris policeman, or *agent de la paix*, so familiar to countless tourists, is about to be transformed by a new uniform. The outfit, designed by the couturier Balmain, substitutes a visored cap for the traditional kepi, and instead of a belted coat the policeman will wear an American-style bombardier's jacket. But not just yet. The new uniform was supposed to be issued at the beginning of October, but it is still not ready. The reason given is that orders for the seventy thousand new outfits required were parceled out to manufacturers all over France, and various delays have been encountered because of regional discrepancies. The allegation of “sabotage” by conservative elements in the police who are against the new uniform has been officially discounted.



“Tell him I’m in conference. Sympathy from Richard Nixon I can do without.”

Langdon, Puruch / Rothco

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